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**The Cult Phenomenon and its Impact on the American
Culture**

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DEDICATION

To my second half without whom I would never be able to carry on this endeavour

To my lady without whom I would never taste life's heavenly flavour

To my cutty Petite to whom I wish all the world's favour

To my last but not least love for whom I am ready to fight difficulties with fervour

Réda

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Abstract

This study investigates the proliferation of the cults phenomenon in the American society mainly after the Second World War. It provides a brief historical account on the genesis of the cults in the United States of America analysing the different cultic types according to different perspectives. The study was characterized by different groupings that altered from each other according to their main ideologies. The scope of the study emphasizes much on the mushrooming of the cultic groups associated with the ‘New Age’ culture which sought innovation within the American society. Therefore, the current study has a crucial importance to shed light on the way political, religious and psychotherapeutic cultic groups are nowadays functioning in the main parts of the US. The research approach followed in this dissertation is a political and a psychoanalytic one. The findings from the research provide evidence that the emergence of organized cultic entities in the 1950s lied behind several views. One of them is the liberal view guaranteed in the American Constitution. The second perspective is the ‘*laissez faire*’ policy and the third horizon of the ‘American Dream’ conception is the ‘*melting pot*’ doctrine.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACM : Anti Cult Movement

BITE : Steven Hassan's model of Behaviour, Information, Thought, and Emotion control

CED : Cult Education Institute

CIA MK-ULTRA: Central Intelligence Agency's Mind Control Project

FBI : Federal Bureau of Investigations

GENZ : Generation of the second millenium

HASSOM: Homicidal And Suicidal State of Mind (for criminal profiling)

ICSA : The International Cultic Studies Association

INFORM : Information Network Focus On Religious Movements

IRS : Internal Revenue Service, U.S department classifying tax-exempted communities

KKKK : Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, descendents of the infamous 19th century KKK

Moonies : Adepts of Myung Sun **MOON**, guru of the Unification Church

RFRA : 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act under President Clinton's administration

SPLC : South Poverty Law Center, U.S organism depicting 12,000 hate groups in the USA

Uncle SAM : States of **America** logo of the 'American Dream'

USCIRF : U.S Commission on International Religious Freedom, publishes annual reports

UFO: Unidentified Flying Object

WASP : White Anglo Saxon Protestants, portayal of the Puritan Americans

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The notion of the freedom of thought has always shaped the American culture. In this concern, the minority systems of belief through the cults are of preponderant priority in the eyes of the American policy makers. In this view, the cultic entities then draw a panoramic dynamism across the large American territory. Eventually, since the independence of the United States of America, the cultish practices have always been guaranteed by the American Constitution through the First Amendment in 1991. The proliferation of the cultic phenomenon, mainly after the Second World War, began to raise questioning about the limits of the individual freedom of thought. The dilemma gained a certain level of fright after the events of September 11th, 2001.

Through a sociological lens, the diversity of the American culture conjugated with the pragmatics of the *laissez-faire* policy offers a wide range of modelling and perceiving societal norms. Henceforth, the study of the cults offers a fascinating view over the dynamics of these cliques. The process of indoctrination and the complex mechanism of recruitment and adhesion into these unorthodox figures of belief make any sociological study upon these groupings substance to controversial dichotomies. Substantially, any psychoanalytic study of the cults should shed light on the consequences of mind manipulation, the coercive control exerted on the adepts and the profiling of the cults' leaders. Additionally, the factors of alienation, isolation, and total devotion to the cult of personality should be put under scrutiny. The sensational and the rational are overlapping ; and they both add fascination into any sociological or psychological study of the cults phenomenon.

However, the questioning within the current study turns around the dynamics of the cults and their functioning in the American society. The research essentially emphasizes on:

- ✓ In what ways are the dynamism of functioning within the cults of Scientology, the Christian Identity Movement and the Unification Church?

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

- ✓ Why do these cults still exert influence in the American society though the potential harm they represent?
- ✓ How can authority holders legislate more restrictions on these cliques without altering the *laissez faire Establishment* process on the American culture?

The first chapter of the current study seeks to clarify the process of the proliferation of the cults in the American society, especially among the baby-boom generation. Accordingly, the chapter discusses the efforts that the policy makers endeavoured for the sake of implementing the vision of the ‘American Dream’. It also discusses the sensationalization of the cult phenomenon by the media. The chapter at the end tries to raise the question about the duration of some cultic groupings despite the prejudice they had done in society.

The second chapter of the scoped study highlights three cults who still exert their influence over their adherents although the fact that these entities barely trespass the limits of legality and rationality. The chapter focuses much on the techniques of mind control, the complex process of brainwashing and the cult of personality of the gurus in the American culture. The study also tends to emunerate the efforts of prominent cult experts trying to prevent from mind manipulation through prescribing psychoanalytic approaches in depicting harmful cults within the popular culture of the United States.

All in all, the current study depicts a two-edged sword that, on one hand, contributed to the flourishing of the *melting pot* modal but, on the other hand, put the American culture nowadays on a crucial crossroad between conciliation and fanaticism.

Chapter One: The Genesis of the American Cults

1. Introduction
2. Defintion of cults
3. Definition of Sects
 - 3.1 Difference between Sects and Cults
4. Roots of the Cults Formation
 - 4.1. Political Perceptions
 - 4.2. Social Perceptions
 - 4.3. Media Treatment of the Cults Phenomenon
5. Major Types of the Cultic Groups
 - 5.1. Political Cults
 - 5.2. Religious Cults
 - 5.3. Strategies for Profiling Potential Adherents within the Cults
 - 5.4. Cult of Personality within the Gurus
6. Conclusion

1. Introduction

The study of the cults and sects in the American society revolves around many perspectives. The sociopolitical background is the layer that gave birth to these entities and the mediatic treatment of the mysterious gurus of these cults gave another perspective including the secret, sensational and fantasmatic world of the cult of personality. The origins of the formation of cults will be dealt within the enclosed chapter. Then, a psychological study comes to be necessary in the understanding of the behavioral factors that lead people join these cliques. This psychoanalytical study will involve the leaders of the American political, religious and psychotherapeutic cults.

2. Definition of the Cults

Cultic entities include many examples that differ according to the origin and type of the vowed belonging of such groupings that are organized under political, social or religious perspectives forming many portrayals of cultic entity. Epistemologically, the word 'cult' is derived from the Latin word 'cultus' which means worship, reference or labour. The name came from the English language through 'culte', a French word which means an intense adoration to a celebrity or a non-mainstream band, game, book or film. The word 'cult' though has a negative connotation since its members obey to every single thing the leader says even if it is an extreme step. Members believe that this is the only way in which one can attain salvation and that everything they do not do is evil (Lifton 3).

Nobody can deny the fact that since the old times, man had lived in patriarchal systems that tried to represent him special and superior to the other species. So this 'survival of the fittest' dogma transposed with the transcendentalist implementation may make the scholars refer back to the

existential question for the creation of any organizational entity including societal norms and behaviours.

The cults are small cliques that practise unorthodox behaviours in disaccordance to the societal norms. This can be in the religious, social, political or even ecological counterfield. Through this dynamism, any grouping can become a cultic entity once its members vow excessive admiration and adoration to the leader. Christianity as an illustration was considered as a cult derived from the Jewish religion (Lifton 4). The term 'cult' is frequently nuanced to negative behaviour; it is not the opinion of their members since they claim a sense of belonging, solidarity and fraternity. The cultic groups are a source of comfort and spiritual guidance facing the difficulties of life. They also contribute to humanitarian, social and ecological actions. They are also a terrain where creativity, originality and cultural diversity are expressed.

According to American authority holders and decision makers, the cult organizations embellished the 'American Dream' and enhanced welfare and pluralism within the American society. The 'American Dream' could not have been achieved without spreading it over each parcel of the huge American territory reaching its furthest point. Thereby, these entities stimulate interreligious dialogues and mutual respect.

3. Definition of the sects

On the other hand of studying the phenomenon of cults, the American sociologists and policy makers find themselves in a dilemma in discriminating the cults from the sects. The term 'sect' originates from the Latin word 'secta' which refers to a particular school of thought. From a religious context, sects can be defined as branches or subgroups of a larger religious group. For instance, Hinduism has Vaishnava and

Shaiva sects, Christianity has Baptist and Lutheran sects, and Islam has Sunni and Shia sects. Sects follow a specific doctrine and are typically smaller than the main religious group. According to Ernest Troeltsch, sects are groups that have separated from the main church due to disagreement with its teachings or actions. Troeltsch suggested that sects are typically composed of marginalized communities and led by a single leader. However, sects are often short-lived and their decline may coincide with the death of their leader (Troeltsch 14). An important aspect that deserves attention is the tension between society and sects as the latter consider themselves the chosen people.

A better understanding of these groups will ensure objectivity when it comes to determining if they are harmful or harmless and if they pose any threat to the society. The sects are perceived as misrepresenting themselves to their members and society. Such misrepresentations create suspicion about the true nature and intentions of these groups that in turn lead to tension between them and society. It is further believed that leaders of these groupings infringe on the individual liberties of the members or mentally manipulate their followers and take ownership of their property. These leaders keep their members under control and pose a threat to the social order (Hassan 12).

3.1 Difference between Sects and Cults

As opposite to the sects, cults can be non-religious and may have secular, political or economic cause. Sects are purely religious and even if they harbour strict uncommon behaviours they remain transparent and seek legitimacy in society. Cultish leaders on the counterpart search this kind of 'legimacy' not from society but from their adherents who are in total submission. A cult has unconventional ideologies and members practise very

different rituals. The members live isolated from society and do as their leader commands them to. The members of the cults isolate the new recruits from their families and try to break them psychologically (Jenkinson 23).

According to Uma Sathwika :

‘To many people, they (sects and cults) look similar but not identical. They both have different features like mind control and brainwashing but :

A sect is a subgroup within a larger religious organization whereas a cult is a small, often controversial group with unorthodox beliefs and practices. Sects connect with the parents’ religion and share core beliefs, while cults often revolve around the charismatic leader and may reject mainstream religious teachings. Cults are more likely to be perceived as dangerous and controlling than sects.’ (Sathwika 15)

Another major difference between cults and sects is the position of their leaders. Generally, sect leaders do not seek wealthy material situations whereas cult leaders are most of the times underdogs and usually exploitative of their members’ financial and physical situations. The Interpol (International Police Organization) reports on the financial and sexual abuses perpetrated by cultish leaders rather than sectarian ones all over the world (Hassan 16).

Eventually, due to the difficulty in separating technical definitions from popular value judgements on the ‘sect’ and ‘cult’ terminology, sociologists like Eileen Barker (1989) and Gordon Melton (2004) had begun

to coin the acronym NRM (New Religious Movements). That contemporary sociological term tries to draw attention on factual aspects rather than value-laden definitions. It again refers to cults as 'religious' whereas they can be atheist

Since the mid twentieth century, the USA has witnessed the mushrooming of more than five thousand sectarian entities and cultic groupings. Steven Alan Hassan (1998), a former cult member and nowadays a milestone in the domain of cult expertise and 'deprogramming', states that: *'In the past twenty years, the destructive cult phenomenon has mushroomed into a problem of tremendous social and political importance. It is estimated that there are now approximately three thousand destructive cults in the United States of America. They vary from religious to political, sexual, educational or even psychotherapeutic ones'* (Hassan 36). Thereby, the study of the major conditions in the USA that helped proliferation of these cliques is compulsory.

4. Roots of the Cults Formation

The rooting in the formation of cultic groups includes several clauses in the genesis of the political, social and mediatic perspectives.

4.1. Political Perspectives

The First Amendment to the American Constitution stipulates that the state should never intervene against the freedom of believing or not believing. It comprehends three main clauses about freedom of faith and state non-interventionism:

- The 'Establishment' Clause declares the USA a country who will never privilege a religion from another one i.e all the belief systems are given equal rights in the 50 American States.

- The 'Free Exercise' Clause dictates the legislative tools to separate the States from religion.
- The 'Church's Primary Purpose' Clause imposes constitutional limitations to the liberty of faith when the latter hinders the peaceful streaming of the States and forbids any political activity of the belief system groups.

The actions of worshipping or being atheist should not clash with social freedom and must respect the Public Policy Rule. The 'church's Primary Purpose' Clause along with The Civil Rights Act of 1964 are significant legislations that outlawed 'discrimination based on race, color, religion, or national origin'.

It was through these amendments that a plethora of cults emerged and exerted influence. Not only they were protected by law but their members were receiving state subventions as many of them were legally considered as 'churches'. All along with other charity associations and non-profit organizations, some cults also fitted in 'tax exemption' rules.

The multicurality of the 'American Dream' is the very fundamental of the American society since the post Second World War era. Consequently, the policy makers had entrepreneured each manoeuvre to better that dream.

4.2. Social Perspectives

The triumph of the USA in the Second World War made her alongside with the USSR a political and economic superpower. The 1950s booming gave birth to a new well-educated middle-class -socially wealthy and politically devoted to the 'Uncle Sam' principles.

Ironically, this rapid change in society increased interests in new forms of religiosity especially between the 1960s and the 1970s when generations affiliated themselves with groups completely different from their parents' faith and beliefs. Sociologists have also described a culture of 'seekership' amongst the young people interested in exploring such groups. The counter culture movements of the Hippies, women's emancipation and

environmentalist actions had begun to gain terrain over the traditional lifestyles of the pre-war generation who was still traumatized by the horrors of the Second World War and yet anxious about a nuclear conflict with the Soviets.

This concept of 'seekership' among the 'Baby Boom' generation- which comprised the considerable number of about 80 million new born after the war had made their parents apprehend mushrooming of those new tendencies.

It is worthwhile mentionable here that Hitler and Mussolini were charismatic leaders who drew their followers into millions of deaths without revealing their real intentions to them. The scar within the American society was then too deep to be easily withdrawn. As a matter of fact, many anti-cult movements were created in parallel to the 'New Age' thinkings, namely Family Federation which turns its name nowadays to 'The International Cultic Studies Association(ICSA)' and the 'Information Network Focus On Religious Movements (INFORM)' based in the UK and agencing in the USA mainly.

4.3. Media Perceptions on the Cults

The originality and mystery surrounding the cults and sects indeed have fascinated humans since the dawn of the ages. In addition, transition from neutral aspects of worshipping to pejorative connotations has been a subject of fantasm in the media wherein Adam Ferguson – a prominent socialist scholar expert in media- points out that : *'all what is mysterious attracts audience', 'Crime pays', or even 'if it bleeds it leads'*(Ferguson 4).

According to Neal- another milestone in media influence on the American culture, the analysis of television shows from 1958 to 2008 consistently perpetuate stereotypes about cults and their members, portraying them in the most extreme ways. Ferguson states that 'television remains one

of the most influential vehicles in American culture for the reification and proliferation of stereotypical imagery' (Ferguson 85)

While at least in theory, news sources are meant to convey accurate information, they may exaggerate stories for the sake of attracting viewers, especially when it comes to the serial killers, UFO (Unidentified Flying Objects) phenomena, mafia razzias, or mysterious groups-the subject of this paper. Since the installation of television in each American household, exposure to media coverage of the sensational stories reshaped deeply the American public opinion in perceiving fiction as the absolute reality, indeed. Groupuscules, then, widened their sympathy and support in conveying the post-war generation to giving them the answers to their 'seekership' mentioned beforehand in this paper. In fact, only few persons really believe that what they see in this world is all there is. It was through this vulnerability that the cultic groups assumed that there must be some supernatural force or being which is there either to help or to threaten.

In newspapers and radio passing by television advertisements, the cults operated in a methodological imagery in which they promised *higher* or *secret* knowledge that would give their followers important and overhuman powers. The sensational and the fantasmatic image is still prevailing over the rationale in the culture of the American media and social media then and now.

5. Major Types of the Cultic Groups

As mentioned by Hassan, cults may be divided into several types. The current paper highlights the two major types of the American cults according to the number of their followers, the notoriety of their gurus and the impacts they have on the American culture.

5.1. Political cults

To the scholars who do not deepen their academic research on cultish behaviours, the distinction between political cults and fanatic wings of the ‘lefters’ or ‘righters’ can not be easily depicted if not directly referred to the devotion of the members of each branch of their respective leaders.

The core differentiation between cults and the other groupings relies most on the personality of their leaders which is extremely charismatic and controlling. Janja Lalich-a former political cult member and now a cult expert- explains that Christianity for instance preaches against abortion and extra-conjugal relations but ‘*does not intevene in your bed to see with whom you are sleeping*’ (Lalich on her YouTube channel, April 2023). In fact, any leader of any given type of cults actually practises this kind of body control (Lalich 25). The ‘Lalich Center on Cults and Coercion’ and ‘lollycenter.com’ are two social media broadcasting on the internet about the mind control and brainwashing methods used by the political cults.

Steven Hassan relates the different ways of vulnerability that desperate people face so that they become easy preys for cultish recruitment: migration, divorce, death of close relationship, post-war depression or loss of a job. The psychotherapists become then the only door of salvation from depression. He explains that once the psychotheraputists lose the ethical boundaries between them and their clients then begins a cult-like dominance. The educational cultish leaders frequently hold meetings in the hotels for hundreds of participants in counterpart of huge amounts of participation fees. Moreover, the more the courses are advanced the more money is demanded to reach the so-called ‘peak-experience’.

Dr. Gillian Jenkinson – a prominent expert in cults nowadays- joined a psychotherapeutic cult called The Love of God Community in 1973 at age

of 21. She says that *'It had a little to do with love or with god'* (Jenkinson 18). She describes the different steps from which the initiated persons face before diving in the unconscious dependence to the psychology of the cult. The first initiation is 'love bombing' that renders the client feel comfort in a friendly and co-operative milieu. The second step is 'deception' which is giving them new identities and enrolls them in new activities. The third step is 'reciprocity' that is to persuade the seekers that they have to donate their money or even their body to the cult leader as a kind of obligation. The new member then enters the process of coercion or thought reform also called brainwashing or mind control (Jenkinson 56).

Arisen from the profiling of the cult of personality, the leaders of the political cults stood up as brilliant preachers under the third and fourth form. The sociopolitical ideology of 'Peoples Temple' with its leader Jim Jones for instance guided them to perceive mass suicide as a revolutionary act. The 'aboutness' of the sermons usually used within the religious speeches is not the same within the mainstream political parties or traditional religions. For some destructive cults, Jim Jones speeches focus on sociopolitical concepts like soviet, Marxism, and communism. The terms generally used in the churches like 'kingdom' and 'father' take the audience attending cultish rituals to another conception of that kingdom. It is not 'heaven' but as a 'spaceship' coming to earth and taking the Peoples Temple members to outer space. The term 'father' is not Jesus or god but the alien or the earthly ancestor in Jim Jones' sermons (Palyton et al. 16).

Another specialist in political cults, Daniel Shaw (2014), who was in his turn a former cult member, says

'...My impetus to develop a theory about the relational system of the traumatizing narcissist stemmed initially from my own need

to make a sense of the guru I have idealized... Eric Fromm's way of understanding Hitler and his followers taught us a lot about authoritarianism, but an educated public is not what stopped Hitler- he stopped because the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour '. (Shaw 4).

Shaw insisted on the fact that the intellectual elite was incapable of preventing mass killings of the Second world War but the salvation of humanity came out from the mistake of the Japanese army who ignored the real potential of its enemies the USA and the USSR, who possessed a new weapon, the nuclear bomb.

Citing Dr.Eric Fromm, Daniel Shaw added :

'...From Caligula to Nero to Stalin and Hitler we see that their need to find believers, to transform reality so that it fits their narcissism, and to destroy all critics, is so intense and so desperate precisely because it is an attempt to prevent the outbreak of their own insanity. Paradoxically, the element of insanity in such leaders makes them also successful. It gives them that certainty and freedom from doubt which so impressive to the average person'. (Shaw 15)

Rick Ross (2019), who was involved in a radical political cult in the 1970s and became a deprogrammer and cult intervention specialist, founded the 'Cult Education Institute' which provides information and resources. He claims that the United States used a covert illegal CIA research programme called MK-ULTRA in the 1950s and 1960s on Canadian and US citizens which came out to recognize that intelligent people are more susceptible in

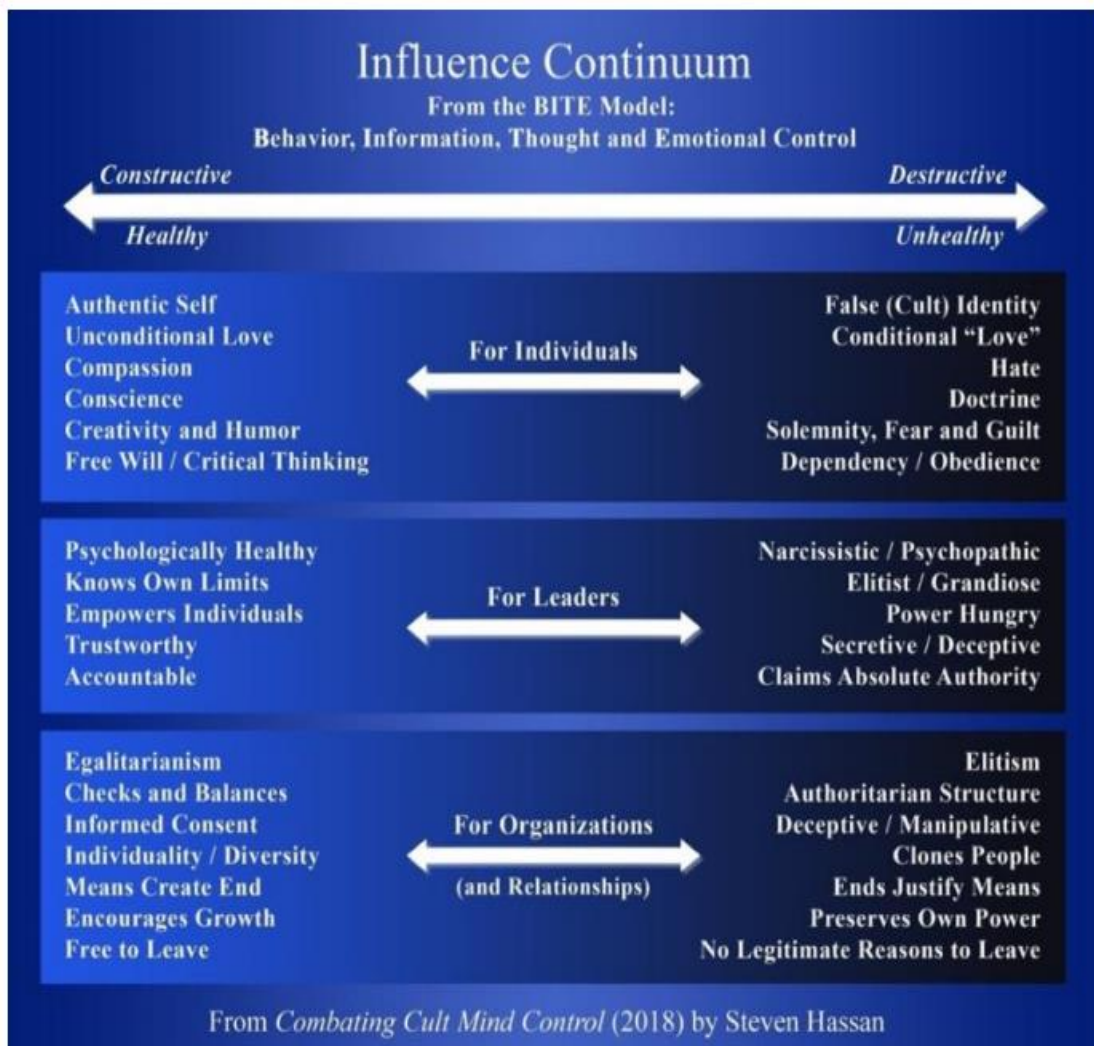
many cases to manipulation. In a lecture given by him, he claimed that asking young Highly Educated people to 'save the world' is sometimes easier than attracting other fringes about these political issues (Ross 22).

5.2. Religious Cults

Religious cults are the most numerous cults not only in the USA but all over the world. It is this type that creates much complexity about the typology of the religious cults and their specificities out from the sects. The transcendentalistic ideas and desire for martyrdom in these groupings is highly indoctrinated. Accordingly, high importance was given to depicting these religious entities since the events of September 11th, 2001. One particular aspect that presented challenges to the American authorities is the nature of religious activity in the sense that actions and practices are not prescribed or measured by precise criteria except that they must not be against the established order under the umbrella of the American constitution.

Steven Hassan is taken as a milestone reference in detecting harmful entities as he himself was a cult member of the Moonies international cult for more than a decade. He details the cult personality of the leader in his BITE model. The model proposes that Behaviour, Information, Thought and Emotions control constitute the very mind control of the cult leaders. The terms 'brainwashing' or 'thought control' are used by other psychologists like Lifton, Lalich and Singer. Hassan says 'cults suppress the real self and build a new identity over that which is controlled by the external authority or cult.' (Hassan 51).

Figure 1: The Influencec Continuum from the Bite Model



Source: Hassan, Steven Alan. <https://freedomofmind.com/cult-mind-control/influence-continuum/>

Philip Zimbardo (2005) a psychologist who is best known for his Stanford prison experiment explained that it can be problematic to assume that one's

behaviours reflect their personalities, and insisted that situational factors are much more powerful than people usually realize. He maintains that behaviour cannot be examined without considering the context. These observations lead the scholars study the psychological effect that lead persons of high educational status join harmful cliques.

5.3. Strategies for Profiling Potential adherents within the Cults

As highlighted beforehand, specialists in discursive analysis relate the very importance of the words in recruiting and mind controlling. Following special rituals in the indoctrination, the gurus of the religious cults achieved their agenda with brilliant oratory skills that made their admirers believe that they were messianic figures or simply not humans.

Figure 2: Comparative study between speeches of the mainstream religious groups and religious doomsday cults:

Discourse aspects	The language of destructive cults	The language of mainstream religion
Aboutness	Non-religious content features	Religious content features
Communication styles	1. Othering 2. Intensification 3. Strong elaboration	1. Personal involvement 2. Moderate elaboration
Text dimensions	1. Highly persuasive 2. Highly elaborative	1. Moderately persuasive 2. Moderately elaborative

Source: Palyon et al., ‘Distinguishing the Language of Destructive Cults from the Language of Mainstream Religion: Corpus Analysis of Sermons’ p.33

Alongside with Foucault’s discursive methodology, Palayon Todd and Vungthong (2022) in this table coin the term ‘destructive’ to some infamous religious doomsday cults as they committed many atrocities on their members, but emphasize on the discourse of their leaders who overwhelmed their followers with extraordinary communication styles that gave a surrealistic dimension to their texts. Here, one can directly refer to the

speeches of Mussolini and Hitler who engaged their sympathizers in a bloody conflict without even these followers had been taken conscious about the dangerousity of their sympathy.

Milgram's (1963) obedience study in which participants were urged by an authority figure in a white lab coat to continue electrocuting another person whenever he answered a question incorrectly, also effectively demonstrates the power of situational factors. At one point in the study, the participants were led to believe that the other had been in a significant amount of pain and had possibly died, but still approximately 60 percent of participants decided to carry on with the increasingly strong shocks. They acted in ways that were not consistent with their usual behaviour or the expectations of the researchers that Milgram consulted before the start of the study. (Milgram 68)

Accordingly, in Asch's (1951) conformity study, participants had to determine which line matched the length of the given line and were able to answer the question correctly, but once the participants heard others give different response, they abandoned their correct answer for the incorrect one the confederates had reported. The same influence of situational factors that modifies behaviour are observed nowadays within the GENZ generation who may sometimes acquire schichophrenic personality once seated in front of their keypals (Hassan 89).

All of these studies support the idea with a context that can impact the people within them, and, just like the circumstances presented in these studies, the situational pressures that exist in cults may plausibly produce the same compliance, conformity, and obedience concluded from the empirical studies of Milgram, Asch, Zimbardo and the like.

Gillian Jenkinson (2013) exemplified this mechanism by means of a frog put in boiling water .As she pointed out: ‘If you put a frog into boiling water it will immediately jump out to try to escape the danger. But if you put in cold water and slowly heat it up, by the time the frog realizes it is in danger, it is too late’ (Jenkinson 18). The theory of the frog in the boiling water developed by Gillie Jenkinson is the result of her own experience in a psychotherapeutic cult. The behavioural profile of the leaders of the religious cults is described as naturally charismatic and authoritarian, with hypnotic capabilities, quite and modest physical appearance, but comes to the fore when speaking to the groups (Lofland 52). To the cult expert Janja Lalich, the cult gurus are megalomaniacs who are perceived as superior rooted, identified with great revolutionary figure. They spend a lot of time alone and enjoy intriguing fantasy life, brought up to control anger and not to show emotion. They look very calm and deliberate, live a clean life without vices as it would not alter the organizational structure of the group. The formula is thus simple but very rare in the common people: unrelenting beliefs, rage, speaking skills, and cunning (Lalich 95).

5.4. Cult of Personality within the Gurus

Robert Jay Lifton –the first American expert in cultic brainwashing-identified eight components of thought reform. ‘Milieu control’ which means that communication (newspapers, television, etc), nutrition, sleep, and even sex relations must be under strict supervision. Second is ‘mystical manipulation’ done by means of strict rituals about ways of clothing and rehearsing. The technique of deception leads the followers, according to Lifton, to the ‘purity’ phase which is complete denial of the members’ past. All what means is their present nouns and complete obedience to the supreme leader. The fourth component of the thought control process is confessing the sins of the members. That technique is a useful pressure tool

in the hand of the leaders in case a member decides to leave or condemn the cult. Next, the new recruit is loaded with an exclusive cultish code language that cannot be understood but by the members. The new recruit is then taught that only the leader has the ‘sacred science’ and that the belief system must be prevalent over the individualistic attempts. The last step is the very specificity of all the cults : the leader has what Lifton calls ‘the dispensing of existing’ which is that it is up to the leader to say what is right and what is wrong, who is enlightened and who is not (Lifton 105).

6. Conclusion

To conclude this first part, nobody can deny the mystery and the secrecy of these cultic cliques but nobody also can depict methodologically a given groupuscule as being benign or malign. The American sociologists and psychologists try to provide the human sciences with a multitude of studies in this field but they face the main dilemma that turns around the notorious existence of the so many cults in the USA since the era under study. Their technique in deception tresspasses both the legislative and the executive authorities in depicting entities that may cause potential harm the public order. Analysing their techniques in deception both on their adherents and on the public authorities, relating the measures taken by the American localities to limit their activities, and discussing about the long term agenda of some infamous cults is a matter of subject in the following chapter.

Chapter Two: A Plunge into Controversial American Cults

1. Introduction
2. Scientology
 - 2-1 Methods of Recruitment via Celebrities
 - 2-2 Tactics of Deception and Embezzlement
3. Christian Identity Movement:
 - 3-1 The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (KKKK)
 - 3-2 Aryan Nations
 - 3-3 'The Order'
 - 3-4 The 'White Anglo Saxon Protestant' Indoctrination Process
4. Unification Church
5. The Cult of Personality within the American Culture
6. Conclusion

1. Introduction

Based on Lifton's writings on thought reform(Lifton, 1969), on Janja Lalich's Transcendental Bounded Choice theory(Lalich, 2020), and on Hassan's BITE model (Hassan, 2000) defined in the previous chapter, the current case study offers a dive into the sophisticated methods of recruitment, the techniques of deception and coercion, and the long but indeed efficient processes of brainwashing and indoctrination the cultish entities - subject of the current study- still exert on their disciples. It is worth mentioning that the cult of personality is predominantly present within the American culture, and through a thorough analysis of the gurus' charisma, the current chapter tends to depict the prevailing traits of this cult.

2. Scientology

Founded by Lafayette Ron Hubbard (1911-1986) in 1950, the cult claimed to adopt a new version of Christianity. Ron Hubbard, the charismatic guru of that clique did not manage his efforts to recruit adherents to his controversial theories. Due to his profession as science-fiction author, the persons of interest were, from the beginning of his quest, the Hollywood stars. Throughout their blockbusters, everybody noticed that Tom Cruise or John Travolta deliberately refusing assistance or stunts climbed dangerous sites and showed the iconic body position of the Scientologists (Klein 56). Eventually, Twenty years later The Los Angeles Church of Scientology Celebrity Center was inaugurated in 1970 and amassed celebrities from the four corners of the American continent (USA and Canada).

2.1. Methods of Recruitment via Celebrities

Being aware of the mass media's great influence in the American culture, Ron Hubbard wrote a series of books and published the still broadcasting '*freedom*' magazine in which he explained his theory on 'Dianetics' and his rejection of psychiatry as a science (Sharp 63). Lifton's criteria of "Thought Reform" appear in the cult of personality in Ron Hubbard. They are as follow:

- a. Milieu control: The Gold Base in Riverside County, California is the principal headquarter of the Scientology where adherents are exposed to authoritarian

- discipline in a complete secrecy. Beyond the fact that they are being indoctrinated to the church's principles, huge amounts of money are depicted from their bank accounts.
- b. Mystical manipulation: The controller creates a sense of oath and reverence around his leadership, often using religious or spiritual language to manipulate followers. For the case of Hubbard, 'dianetics' was the doctrine imposed over his supportrs.
 - c. Demand for purity: The controller sets strict and rigid standards for behavior and beliefs, punishing those who do not conform. The 'engrams' are the results of emotional scars that the scientologist counselor has to treat the 'patient' for. This patient -or adept in more clear terms- should not refer to any kind of critical thinking.
 - d. Confession: Followers are encouraged to confess their thoughts and feelings to the leader or group, creating a sense of vulnerability and dependence. Ron Hubbard deliberately recorded the confessions of his disciples in case they decided to manifest critical thinking.
 - e. Sacred science: The controllers presents their beliefs and teachings as absolute truth, beyond question or doubt. Ron Hubbard denied psychiatry as a science and imposed dianetics as the sacred science.
 - f. Loading the language: according to Lifton, the controller uses language in a way that limits critical thinking and reinforces group identity and loyalty. The secret language in the case of Scientologists is the 'Xenu' the 'galactic federacy language'. Throughout his profession of a science fiction writer, creating a secret language was not a difficult task for Hubbard.
 - g. Doctrine over person: Followers are expected to prioritize the group's beliefs and teachings over their own individual thoughts and feelings. By this process,

huge sums were donated by the indoctrinated disciples as a sign of devotion and good willingness (Samways, 26).

- h. Dispensing of existence: The controller has power to decide who is worthy of being part of the group and who is not, often leading to exclusion and isolation of dissenters. It becomes quite hard for the persons who got excluded from any cult to reintegrate their previous life as they went through long and desperate process of isolation and deprivation of family and professional life(Jenkinson 5).

The Scientology sympathizers reckoned a huge number that reached all the five continents and Hubbard amassed fortunes from adherence fees revenues, donations, charity expositions and propaganda books. The dichotomy of non-profit and fund raising within Hubbard's organizational charts created diverse judicial and legal prejudice to the American culture of 'laissez-faire' policy.

2.2. Tactics of Deception and Embezzlement

As related by the cult expert Steven Hassan in the first chapter about the BITE model, the main characteristic of the gurus is to consider enemy all those who do not accept his or her doctrines (Hassan 6). For the case of the Scientology, they practised tactics of attacking their opponents rather than defending allegations and bad reputation. As an illustration, Tom Cruise sued his former wives Katie Holmes and Nicole Kidman for defamation and false light. The prosecutions have never given followings in return of money arrangement (Klein 87). The sole winner in that media exposure was Hubbard and his extravagant theory on 'Dianetics'.

The second characteristic of the cult leaders is to be extremely underdogs when seeking power, authority and money anyhow the methods (Lalich 105, Barker 122). In the case of Ron Hubbard, he multiplied lawsuits in the USA to amend the recognition of his cult as being a new religious movement. 11 members of Scientology were condemned in 1977 for infiltration conspiracy into the government and illegal possession of governmental documents (Klein 76). Consequently, the Internal Revenue Service took Scientology out from the list of tax-exempted associations in 1980. It

accused it of fraud, embezzlement, commercial malpractice and violation of the human rights in the USA. In 1983, the IRS also alleged Scientology of harassment towards its members. After harsh judiciary battles with the IRS, the Scientology won again its tax-exemption status in 1993(USCIRF report, 2009). Accordingly, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act was amended the same year Scientology had regained its status of a minority religious movement. It aimed at putting under scrutiny the mushrooming minority religions in the USA (see Appendix I). Many lawmakers put parallels between the two legal battles as they got alarmed about suspicious embezzlement practices done by David Miscavige the self enthroned new guru of the cult after the death of Hubbard.

3. Christian Identity Movement

The movement is a confederation of numerous militants against the US government's policies. They are obsessed by multiple theories on conspiracy against the white people. This infamous cult comprises three main occult groupings: the Knights of Ku Klux Klan (KKKK) the predecessor of the Ku Klux Klan, Aryan Nations, and The Order militia.

3.1. The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan

It is hard for the American society to accept such a group to be the resurrection of the anarchist Ku Klux Klan militia who sowed terror against the slaves in the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Throughout the Hollywood productions, everybody was fascinated by the iconic racist symbols of the KKK i.e. white hoods and flowing sheets chasing the fleeing slaves and burning them on fiery crosses at night. The new version of that horror series adopted several techniques of coercion and practised more modern tactics of brainwashing among its disciples.

In this dynamics, Janja Lalich - another milestone in cult expertise and deprogramming who was herself a leader member in a political cult for a whole decade decrypts the methods of coercion in a political cultish entity. She divides them into four systemic steps.

First, Lalich relates the manifestation of the ‘charismatic authority’. In fact, throughout the history of man, many charismatic leaders have had powerful influences that have sowed thorough dedication to good deeds. For the case of the Ku Klux Klan or other fanatic groupings, the authoritarian charisma of the leaders carried high potential of abuse and robbed their members of individuality and free will. Had these members showed remorse, they would have directly been eliminated by the guru’s lieutenants because they had become a threat to the legitimacy of the “White Cause”.

Second, Janja Lalich coins the term ‘Transcendent Belief’ that she describes as “a system of thought that explains past, present and future. It is transcendent in the sense that it looks to, indeed predicts a radical change-either progressive or reactionary in the social order. It not holds forth a utopian vision but also offers the actual means by which to get to the new world. When that aspect is present, a belief system becomes an ideology” (Lalich 56).

As far as the system of ‘mind control’ is concerned and already subject to analysis by Hassan, Lifton, Jenkinson and Barker in the current study, Lalich borrows the term ‘Peak Experiences’ from the humanist psychologist Abraham Maslow. These peak experiences within the KKKK and other political extremists are characterized by “blissful feelings; focused attention on the here and now; freedom from anxieties, doubts and inhibitions; spontaneous, effortless functioning; and a sense of being merged or harmonized with one’s environment.”(Lalich 38).

Lalich concludes her analysis of the systemic coercion by what she calls the ‘system of influence’ that includes ‘group norms, or the emotional and psychological atmosphere, modes of communication, and styles of information dissemination...peer pressure, cultural convention, and mimicry; and commitment, or a sense of responsibility, duty and obligation” (Lalich 60).

While their numbers are significantly lower than their peak during the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, the Southern Poverty Law Center

reported in 2022 active KKKK adherents in 41 states across the U.S (SPLC website). These cliques tend to be small on the fringe but their ideology of white supremacy and racism remains a threat. Occurring in the deep south of the USA, the KKKK tends to be considered as a national movement, with urban centres like Detroit, Portland, Denver, and Indianapolis boasting tens of thousands of members and significant political influence.

Actually, the ‘Knights of the Ku Klux Klan’ was founded in 1975 by David Duke (b.1950) in an effort to present the Klan in a more positive light. They have sought media exposure and have presented themselves as a contemporary ‘white civil rights’ organization. But, the same racist discourse is hidden beneath their exterior. As they often pointed out:

“Non-white who reside in America should be expected to conduct themselves according to the Christian principles and must recognize that race mixing is definitely wrong and out of the question. It will be a privilege to live under the authority of a compassionate white Christian government”

(The Knights Party cited in SPLC website, 2024)

“The Mexican birthrate in this country is five times that of white people. The black birthrate is four times larger. America will become a Third World nation if these trends continue. Unless we slow down and cut off immigration by beefing up border control and encourage welfare recipients to have fewer kids, the white population in America will be swamped”

(David Duke cited in the SPLC website, 2024)

The former KKK adherents perpetuated a series of assassinations in what was called then the Freedom Summer Killings of 1964 and the 1965 murder of civil rights activist Viola Liuzzo. As for the new born KKKK, terrorist attacks against black people diminished and new tendencies of hatred against the Jewish people entered into the glossary of the coercion techniques of the KKKK. The lynching of Michael Donald in 1981 led to lawsuits against the cult’s leader.

Nonetheless, the new techniques of persuasion out from coercion and use of force led the leader of the KKKK to have political pretention. Eventually, David Duke became member of Louisiana House of Representatives from 1989 to 1992. The Knights reportedly increased to 1,500 by 1979 and there were an additional 10,000 supporters who were non-members. The Knights, like many other American hate groups, became “Nazified” and shifted their major focus from black people to Jews. Even though Duke’s strategies and ego were undoubtedly what spurred the Knights’ expansion, the arrogant commander was a continual danger to his unit. In 2013, the Anti-defamation League described him as “perhaps America’s most well-known racist and anti-Semite” (see Appendix III). According to the League website, he was the first person to accuse the Zionists of perpetrating the events of September 11th, 2001 as the Mossad (Israel’s espionage organism) informed 4,000 Jews not to go work that day. Being aware of the immense role of media exerted on the American culture, Duke was sure that his sentiments would attract more adepts.

The gurus of the group, from Duke to Thomas Robb, the current leader have faced criticism from other KKK members who see their involvement in politics and mainstream media as hypocritical and ineffective, as well as from their own racist sentiments, which always find the way to show through the smokescreen.

It is worthwhile mentionable here that the occult activities of the conspiracy group spawned controversial figures such as the anti-Semite Don Black in Alabama, White Aryan Resistance founder Tom Metzger in California, and David Lane, who would go on to command the terrorist organization ‘The Order’ in Colorado.

Here Hassan’s BITE model interferes when David Duke took the KKKK under media spots and attempted a political career. He then exposed the secretive unorthodox practices of his disciples, which violated the principles of any cult organizational chart.

3.2. Aryan Nations

Also known as the Church of Jesus Christ Christian was founded in the 1970s evolving into a notable hate group with a Christian identity basis. The cultish ideas of the group conceptualized by Richard Butler (1918-2004) fostered an extensive network

that included neo-Nazi, skinheads, the aforementioned KKKK, white supremacists, and militia groups. These affiliations frequently gathered at the Aryan Nations compound in Hayden Lake, Idaho, reinforcing their shared ideologies and operational strategies.

The core beliefs of the Aryan Nations were deeply rooted in the Christian Identity movement, which propagated the notion that white Aryans are God's chosen people, while Africans and Jewish were deemed inferior and evil, respectively. This theological stance was instrumental in the formation of the cult's identity and mission.

Richard Butler, the guru, ordained by the American Institute of Theology, was heavily influenced by Christian Identity teachings and sought to establish a white supremacist strong hold in Hayden Lake, Idaho, after moving his *congregation* from California in the early 1970s.

The *congregation* gained infamy through their annual Aryan World Congress gatherings, initiated by Butler, which attracted various leaders of racist and white supremacist movements. These meetings served as a catalyst for brainwashing and expanding the group's influence and membership. Within intensive sessions of brainwashing their new sympathizers, they eventually incorporated violent and criminal activities into their agenda. The Aryan Nations played a significant role in the formation of The Order, a splinter cultic group responsible for a series of bank robberies and the assassination of a radio host, aiming to fund a race war and overthrow the U.S government (Cunningham 96)

In addition to their militant activities, Aryan Nations was known for its aggressive recruitments strategies, targeting young, impressionable whites through the distribution of racist and anti-Semite materials in schools and public places. The group also capitalized on the burgeoning digital landscape, utilizing the internet for broader dissemination of their ideologies and for recruitment purposes. This shift to digital platforms marked a new phase in the group's efforts to influence and mobilize supporters (Cunningham 106).

The decline of Aryan Nations began in the late 1990s and 2000s, precipitated by internal conflicts, legal challenges, and significant court rulings that financially

crippled the organization. Following Richard Butler's death in 2004, the cult experienced a decline in cohesion and influence. The group splintered into several factions, each led by different individuals claiming leadership of the organization. This fragmentation, coupled with legal and financial challenges, diminished the group's ability to operate as a unified entity

3.3. 'The Order'

Also known as "*Bruder Schweigen*" or "the Silent Brotherhood", the militia emerged as a notorious supremacist group in the early 1980s, founded by Robert Jay Mathews. By October 1983, at his family compound in Metaline Falls, Washington, Mathews and eight others, including neo-Nazi militant and adherent of the racist Christian Identity movement, swore an oath to work towards their vision of a white supremacist society. Despite Mathews' preference for the name "*Bruder Schweigen*", the group became widely known as The Order, inspired by the fictional organization in William Pierce's novel *The Turner Diaries*.

Mathews, disillusioned by the lack of support for tax fraud in the 1970s, began to form connections within the white supremacist community, including groupuscules like the Aryan Nations and the National Alliance. This hate entity gained infamy for its extremist ideologies, criminal activities, and particularly the assassination of Jewish radio talk host Alan Berg in 1984. Rooted in Mathews' radical opposition to the federal government and his belief in a Jewish conspiracy controlling America, The Order sought to establish a white supremacist society through violent means.

The Order financed its operations through criminal activities, initially targeting individuals they deemed immoral, such as pimps and drug dealers, and later escalating to counterfeiting and bank robberies. Over a span of five months in 1984, they stole more than four million dollars, but their criminal spree ultimately led to their downfall. The assassination of Alan Berg was a key event in The Oder's campaign of violence because Berg was a vocal critic of right-wing extremism.

The unraveling of The Order began with the arrest of Thomas Martinez in Philadelphia for passing counterfeit money, shortly after the Berg assassination. Martinez's cooperation with authorities led to the exposure of the group's cultish activities and the eventual siege on Whidbey Island, Washington, in December 1984 where Mathews died in a shootout with the FBI.

3.4. The 'White Anglo Saxon' Indoctrination Process

The WASP vision through these cultic entities gained a certain level of alarm after September 11 events. The indoctrinated adherents were fervent believers on complotist malpractices within the American soil. The FBI reports have arisen the degree of alarm into orange and the investigators were linking certain paranoid cultish activities to potential terrorism. The Homicidal and Suicidal State Of Mind (HASSOM) was then applied by the local governments (Meloy et al., 15).

Sociologists Van Der Kemp and Van Koppen identify the modern terrorism going through four major waves since the dawn of the twentieth century including the anarchist, the anti-colonial, the Marxist-Leninist, and the religious terrorism (Van der Kemp; Van Koppen 49). The matter of concern with the religious terrorist wave is that it began, according to the researches of the Western scholars, with the Iranian revolution in 1979. The philosophy of 'the end justifies the means' is highly palpable within the religious cults of the modern times. In this kind of cults, they legitimize use of terror action by referring to divinities or godlike figures. They use a set of dichotomies like black/white, fidel/infidel, good/bad, true/false, ect. The FBI's National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime profiles the religious cult of personality by being extremely paranoid and the leaders very authoritarian and highly narcissistic.

4. Unification Church

Founded by Sun Myung Moon (1920-2012) in South Korea, the cult gained notoriety in the USA since the 1960s thanks to its opposition to the communist systems in the extreme orient notably.

It is somehow difficult to give a specific classification to the cult, as Moon was a harsh opponent to the communist authorities in his country. His political oratory style attracted thousands of sympathizers all over the world and permitted him to obtain facilities to install in the USA. Moreover, the status of a religious movement had made it benefit from the annual subventions and tax-exemptions guaranteed in the First Amendment of the US constitution. Moon was a charismatic leader who named himself the 'Promised Messiah' and convinced his adherents that he was given the divine duty to finish the works of Jesus Christ. Steven Hassan, the prominent cult expert nowadays and a former 'Moonie' (a member of the Unification Church) for more than two years, reported in his book on the Moonies that Moon, as a brilliant orator, delivered academic religious and political seminars on counterparts of important sums given as gifts to the church (Hassan 9). Also, the cult possessed agencies for the exportation of ginseng and M-16 rifles. The role of the media that all the cultic grouping look for was for the case of the Moonies the 'Washington Times' newspaper. Hassan reportedly mentions President Reagan at that times who declared that the Moonies' paper was his favourite (Hassan 10).

He made a prophecy to his followers that the third world war through nuclear weapons would happen in 1977. Even if that prediction never occurred, his authority and manipulative methods would never have been questioned by his disciples.

Through grandiose wedding ceremonies and spirituals recitations, the public was ensorcelled by the cult of personality of Moon. Sun Myung Moon, his wife Hak Ja Han (who took the reins of the cult after her husband's death in 2012), and his lieutenants exerted intensive mind control and financial manipulation over their worshippers. Like Steven Hassan, Anne Besconter is another upstanding reference in cult psychotherapy who escaped the Moonies. In her book about the cult of personality of Moon, she describes him as 'divinely' charming, overwhelmingly caring but excessively greedy. It was common practice to ask the recruits to donate their bank accounts for 'the establishment of theocratic form of government which will replace secular democracies' (Besconter 82).

Historically, the gurus of the cults and cultlike cliques built their bases in small chunks. Their reach was limited as a guru could orate to only so many disciples at once. The techniques of thought reform in the past consisted in retreats and seminars or clandestine meetings out of the public eye. Often, as a guru grew more extreme in behaviour and belief, they also grew more secretive. In the modern times of technological explosion, Steven Hassan the milestone in cult deprogramming (assistance for the people who escaped cults) and a former Moonie member of the Unification Church) says: “*What I am learning is just how completely indoctrinated people can get from just watching YouTube and being on their computer at home*” (Hassan 192). As a matter of fact, Steven Hassan as ancient Moonie wrote a book called ‘the cult of Trump’ in which he compares the former President Trump to Sun Myung Moon and to Ron Hubbard after that the sympathizers of Trump invaded the Congress and tried a coup.

5. The cult of personality within the American Culture

It is worthwhile mentionable that the Southern Poverty Law centre has encountered not less than 1225 hate cults spread over the American states nowadays. In addition, the annual report on the international religious freedom of the U.S Department of State stated that in Russia, the Scientology is considered an extremist organization since 2009 (see Appendix V). According to the same source, French authorities condemned Scientology for criminal acts in 2019 (USCRIF, 2019). In Germany, Canada and Australia the local authorities are facing continuous appeals from the scientologists to consider them a minority religious movement, which is not the case up to nowadays (ibid, 2021).

Obviously, tax exemption and annual state subventions are the targets forsaken in the judicial endeavours of the study cases. Steven Hassan admitted that their strategy of harassing both their former members and lawmakers were however successful as the cults still exercise influence over the four corners of the United States (Hassan 179).

As far as the Moonies are concerned, the great authority Sun Myung Moon had had over his disciples is still palpable but the FBI profilers are reporting that the cult of

personality of Hak Ja Han his wife and successor is not as authoritarian and charismatic as her defunct husband (van Aken 142).

6. Conclusion

In the enclosed chapter, light was shed on three controversial cults who are still exercising although the fact that they did noticeable prejudice on their adherents and on the American society in general. Their formidable methods of recruitment and processes of brainwashing created a sensational mixture of the rational and the extravagant within the American culture.

Another aspect in the highlighted study was the psychotherapists Steven Hassan, Diane Besconter, Rick Ross, Janja Lalich and Gillie Jenkinson who are the nowadays cult experts and by the same time they were all involved in infamous cults. Their thorough devotion in combating the pitiless methods of recruitment; alongside with the 9/11 events; have helped the American authorities put under scrutiny the five thousand cults from which most of them are presumingly not malign.

It is a fact that in the American society the cults of the Scientology, Christian Identity Movement, and the Unification Church are exercising despite the ingrained prejudices they implement on their members and on the American culture on the whole. Still there are devoted adherents revolving around merciless underdog gurus abusing financially and sexually of the depressed people and idealistic youth.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The Utopian view of a pluralistic society in perfect symbiosis ; conjugated with the *laissez faire* policy in the American popular culture ; has always been the endeavour of any political effort to spread the ‘American Dream’ around the four corners of the American land. Through what has been discussed in the current study, one may perceive the difficulties in achieving this task regarding the diversity and complexity of the American scenery.

Subsequently, the cults of Scientology, the Christian Identity Movement, and the Unification Church highlighted in the current dissertation are only small pieces of a panoramic 3,000- piece puzzle that is extremely opportunist and may turn dangerous to the American culture anytime they feel menaced. This study has shown that the reinforcement of the law cases and multiplication of social studies ; alongside with the role of the social media should have bigger impact in order to decrease the number of the lethal entities in the USA and in the whole world in general.

The paradoxes of pluralism and freedom of thought which may collide with opportunism and manipulation of mind impose high levels of sociological, psychoanalytical and political commitment. Indeed, it is this commitment that should draw an efficient treatment of the cult phenomenon to avoid falling in the trap of stigmatization and then judgement of values which are to do harm to the American culture.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: The First Amendment of 1791 and the RFRA of 1993

The First Amendment of the American Constitution

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Religious Freedom Restoration Act (03/111993)

Prohibits any agency, department, or official of the United States or any State (the government) from burdening a person's exercise of religion even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability, except that the government may burden a person's exercise of religion only if it demonstrates that application of the burden to the person: (1) furthers a compelling governmental interest; and (2) is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental interest.

Appendix II:

**List of the prominent cult experts and their sites for counseling,
deprogramming and reporting abusive cult behaviours**

Besconter, Diane (b. 1956)	SPLC.org
Hassan, Steven Alan (b.1954)	freedomofmind.com; ICSA.com
Jenkinson, Gillian (b.1951)	hopevalleycounselling.com
Lalich, Janja (b.1945)	lollycenter.com; lalichcenter.com
Ross, Chris Alan (b.1952)	culteducation.com; adl.org

Appendix III: Official Report of the Anti Defamation League on David Duke, leader of the Aryan Nation about the complotism on the 9/11 events

David Duke has made a career out of spreading unabashed anti-Semitism and white supremacy. Concerning Jews and the State of Israel, Duke's messages typically include conspiratorial depictions of Jewish power and Jewish hatred for non-Jews, a combination he refers to as "Jewish supremacism." In spite of repeated personal claims that he is not an anti-Semite and that not all Jews are bad, Duke has never hesitated to make sweeping generalizations alleging Jewish control of the media, banking, world affairs and governments.

Duke finds creative ways to exploit current events to spread these beliefs. For example, when Duke is not attacking Jews directly, he is spreading conspiracy theories about the Mossad, the Israeli government and unnamed "Zionists" and their role in various world events including the 9/11 attacks, the Iraq war, illegal immigration or any fluctuation in the U.S. economy. Since September 11, Duke has reiterated his belief that Israel and the Mossad perpetrated the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. He has insisted that the Mossad warned 4,000 Jews who worked at the World Trade Center to stay home on the day of the attacks, while allowing thousands of innocent Americans to die. Duke's "proof" further reveals his bigotry--he has said that since Jews control finance, more Israelis/Jews should have died in the World Trade Center. He has also stated that Israel carried out the attacks to turn attention away from its treatment of the Palestinians.

In addition to his anti-Semitic crusade, Duke consistently argues that white people are denied "human rights" in the United States, as employers, schools, and other social institutions favor minorities, particularly African-Americans. Duke has founded organizations and convened conferences with the purpose of defending and preserving the rights of his white "heritage." Although Duke denies that he is a white supremacist and avoids the term in public speeches and writings, the policies and positions he advocates state clearly that white people are the only ones morally qualified to determine the rights that should apply to other ethnic groups.

<https://www.adl.org/resources/news/david-duke>, updated 09.01.2016

APPENDIX IV: 2002 Annual Report on Religious Freedom by the US Department of State: Legal Status of Scientology in Germany

Government (*German*) authorities contend that Scientology is not a religion but an economic enterprise and therefore sometimes have sought to deregister Scientology organizations previously registered as nonprofit associations and require them to register as commercial enterprises. With the exception of Dianetik e.V, a Scientology-related organization in Baden-Wuerttemberg, no Scientology organization has tax-exempt status. Authorities in the state government have attempted to have the tax-exempt status of Dianetik e.V. revoked; however, in January 2002, the State Administrative Court ruled that the organization may retain its tax-exempt status. State officials may appeal the verdict.

Until March 2001, the Government required firms to sign a declaration (a "sect filter") in bidding on government contracts stating that neither the firm's management nor employees were Scientologists. The term "sect filter" is misleading because the declarations are Scientology-specific and in practice do not refer to any other group; they more accurately could be described as "Scientology filters." Firms that failed to submit a sect filter declaration were presumed "unreliable" and excluded from consideration. In response to concerns expressed by foreign governments and multinational firms unable to determine the religious affiliation of all their employees, the Economics Ministry limited the scope of the sect filter to consulting and training contracts in 2000. In March 2001, the Economics Ministry persuaded the federal and state interior ministries to accept new wording that would only prohibit use of the "technology of L. Ron Hubbard" in executing government contracts. Firms owned or managed by or employing Scientologists could bid on these contracts.

Scientologists continued to report discrimination because of their beliefs. A number of state and local offices share information on individuals known to be Scientologists. In addition, to "sect filters" that some local and state government offices and businesses (including major international corporations) and other organizations require job applicants and bidders on contracts to sign, some state governments also screen companies bidding on contracts relating to training and the handling and processing of personal data. The private sector on occasion has required foreign firms that wish to do business in the country to declare any affiliation that they or their employees may have with Scientology. Private sector firms that screen for Scientology affiliations frequently cited OPC... The Federal Property Office has barred the sale of some real estate to Scientologists, noting that the federal Finance Ministry has urged that such sales be avoided, if possible. Scientologists reported employment difficulties, and, in the state of Bavaria, applicants for state civil service positions must complete questionnaires detailing any relationship they may have with Scientology. Bavaria identified some state employees as Scientologists and has required them to complete the questionnaire. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2002/13936.htm>

Appendix V:

2018 Statement of the Human Rights Watch Organization on the Incrimination of the Scientology Church in Russia

“...Under international law, freedom of religion includes the freedom to practice one’s religion or belief both individually and in community with others, in public or in private, and through worship, practice, and teaching. Russia already has many rulings against it for its failure to respect the freedom of religion of faith communities and minority religious groups, such as the Church of Scientology, the Salvation Army, and the Jehovah’s Witnesses

Russia should do right by its national and international obligations to respect freedom of religion,” Denber said. “Russian leadership should make sure that law enforcement is honoring and protecting that right, not trampling on it.”

The Jehovah’s Witnesses are a peaceful religious community. The consistent show of force in raids in many locations in Russia was disproportionate and seemed aimed at sending a strong message of intimidation, Human Rights Watch said.

In most regions, the authorities arrested people they singled out as leaders and organizers of the local Scientology community for such actions as recruiting new members and distributing religious literature that the authorities label “extremist.”

On May 16 in the Orenburg Region, in southwest Russia, law enforcement personnel searched 18 homes in four cities and charged nine people. Two are in pretrial custody and another is under house arrest.

On May 17 in Birobidzhan, in southeast Russia, representatives of the Jehovah’s Witnesses reported that about 150 law enforcement personnel raided the homes of at least nine Jehovah’s Witnesses, confiscating photos, bank cards, money, and computers. An official said that the operation was code-named “Judgment Day.” One person was arrested and charged with organizing activities of an “extremist organization” but was eight days later.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/06/28/russia-sweeping-arrests-jehovahs-witnesses>

Appendix VI: Excerpts from Jim Jones' and Marshall Applewhite's Speeches that led to Collective Suicides in 1978 (909 Deaths) and 1997(39 Deaths)

- ‘The world suffers violence, and violence shall take it by force. If we can't live in peace then let's die in peace...this is what I'm talking about is now is the dispensation of judgement. This is a revolutionay- a revolutionary suicide council. I am not talking about self-destruction. I am talking that we have no other road. I'll tell you about a kingdom level beyond here, and if you want to go there then you have to follow me because i'm the guy who's the key for the moment. I am believing that peace between the two countries (USSR and USA) would also world peace...there are no socialists in the US...And nuclear war will damage too many in Canada and USA and other parts of Europe...Carter (the US President at that time) is becoming aware that he is being led down in pathway to nuclear holocaust’’ (Marshall quoted in Palyaton et al.. rEFLECTION Journal 29(1): Jan-Apr 2022, p. 33)
- “I asked myself: How can I demonstrate my Marxism? The thought was, infiltrate the church... All they're doing is– All they do is taking a drink. They take it to go to sleep. That's what death is, sleep. Hate and treachery. I think you people out here should think about how your relatives were and be glad about that the children are being laid to rest. And all I'd like to say is that I thank Dad for making me strong to stand with it all and make me ready for it. Thank you”

(Jim Jones quoted in Anssi Viljanen ‘a discourse analytical case study of the last speech of Jim Jones’ p.26.

https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=40229)